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The Careers of Senior Men and Women – A Capabilities Theory Perspective

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Abstract

In this article we adopt a capabilities theory perspective to analyse 40 in-depth interviews (20 women, 20 men) exploring the careers of senior women and men in Human Resource Management (HRM). Both groups felt driven by increasingly unconstrained demands of work, in the case of women paid and non-paid domestic work, and for men, primarily paid work, and perceptions of time autonomy (being able to exercise autonomy in allocating one's time) for both differed markedly. However, these senior women appeared to have negotiated a path which fits with their realised functioning and quality of life goals and they measured success in their own terms. Senior men's working patterns and definitions of success remained largely traditional and for most the demands of work were dominant. However, there was evidence that male views were changing with some expressing a desire for a better balance with less time involved with work. Our findings highlight the importance of the family and we suggest that there is a need for the obligations of organisations in terms of their impact on the family unit to be stated and acted upon with the role of fathers as carers equally and explicitly expounded with that of mothers.

Key words: *HRM/HRM; senior women and men; careers, capabilities theory; time autonomy*

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Introduction

Much concern has been expressed about the seeming inability, or general lack of success, of women to break through the 'glass ceiling' and achieve success in significant numbers even in fields such as HRM where they are the dominant group overall. Recommendations of best practice are concerned with achieving equality and organisational policies are enacted to facilitate women having equal potential to access senior posts. However, underpinning much of the existing discussion about equity and achievement is an assumption that measures of success are shared and agreed, for example, the ultimate career success in the corporate world is often taken to be the accessing of a board position (Sheridan, 2003). Yet there may be alternative perspectives, and we suggest that, at least for some, it may be that the failure to achieve positions at the highest levels represents choice rather than repression.

If the reality is that women are exercising choice then we suggest that we need to adopt a different perspective if we are to understand the reality of what is happening. We have selected capabilities theory as an alternative perspective for a number of reasons. As developed by Sen and Nussbaum (for example Sen, 1992(a), (b); 1999; Nussbaum, 1999, 2000), it offers a way of considering inequality that starts from a different position – a different assumptive structure – to those that have most often been used. Capabilities theory propounds that what matters ethically is whether a person is freely able to fully function, and to be or do what they have reason to value.

Basic capabilities, the individual talents and abilities, once enabled (through say, good education and health care) are primed for action as internal capabilities that can be readily used. However, the opportunity to use internal capabilities will only occur if the 'environment' – community and broader societal factors – operate in combination with internal capabilities as combined capabilities. These various factors can be distinguished analytically but need to operate in combination, and thus implicitly demand a multi-disciplinary perspective.

Within this paper we use a capabilities theory perspective (Sen, 1992(a); 1999; Nussbaum, 2000) to examine the findings from a research study that explored the careers of both senior men and women in HRM. We focus in particular on the idea of freedom for individuals to fully function and to become what they each value and consider this in the context of the experiences of our respondents. We begin by introducing capabilities theory and some of its key concepts with an emphasis on gender inequality. Next we draw conclusions from this literature and consider the implications for our understanding of the career experiences of senior women and men. Following an explanation of the research design we then present the findings of our empirical studies and, finally, draw conclusions in terms of organisational policy development with reference to our initial literature review.

The Capabilities Perspective

Within capabilities theory, women's freedom to undertake paid work is important not only in terms of enhancing women's freedom and agency, but is also critical to the overall quality of life and economic success of nations (Sen 1992; 1999). However, in

Koggel's (2003) study of women, new to the workplace and in lower paid work, she notes that although she accepts this position, that additional levels of complexity need to be brought to this central concern. Entering the workplace, Koggel argues, does not, *de facto*, improve women's freedom and agency, and as such, is insufficient as a developmental policy goal in its own right. However, though this argument is likely to be of relevance, Koggel's work was on women at the lower levels of organisations. For this article, our concern centres on women in senior positions. From the perspective of capabilities theory two primary research questions emerge: firstly, what characterises 'readiness to act' – the *internal capabilities* – for senior women, and secondly, what are the *organisational* and *societal* factors which they perceive enable, or undermine, their freedom of opportunity to fully function.[1]

Sen (1997: 7) argues that the term equality of opportunity is widely used to mean the equal availability or restriction of something rather than the 'equality of overall freedoms'. In that sense it disregards the fundamental diversity of human beings and the importance of issues such as relative wealth. From a capabilities perspective, equality of opportunity, while important, is subordinate to *freedom of opportunity*, as the latter is concerned not only with access to opportunity but also whether individuals have been enabled to convert 'goods' and thus achieve what *they* would

[1] There are some interesting and relevant differences of opinion between the key analysts on such issues. For Sen, capabilities are real opportunities; Nussbaum would also add to these talents, internal powers and abilities. Robeyns (2003) suggests that Sen's approach is better for measurement of individual advantage and the design of socio-economically grounded policy proposals, however, more about proactive engagement with structural, contextual criteria would make Sen, more applicable. Nussbaum's thinking is more centrally concerned with moral philosophical principles, legal rights and political declarations: she is interested in a more qualitative analysis of how people cultivate their capabilities. Further, Nussbaum suggests that Sen's focus on health, education, the family and free choice of occupation is, *de facto*, a list of central concerns. Sen is concerned with the development of such lists, as they are not generated from the communities that they purport to serve. A prescriptive list, he argues, may deny women in different communities the opportunity to pursue a capabilities set of their choosing, given their circumstances and their challenges, and thus may actually limit voice, agency and democratic activity.

wish. In other words, the capabilities approach is concerned, ethically speaking, with both ends *and* means. So, for example, if a physically disabled person has the necessary education and training to work as a computer analyst but cannot readily access the offices necessary to undertake her work, she may have equality of opportunity (at one level) but not freedom of opportunity (in terms of the physical barriers that inhibit her opportunities to access the workplace). For Sen, difference matters. Thus, diversity has a central, definitional role in understanding inequality. First, within the capabilities approach, sources of antecedent inequality require attention and redress. Further, by not paying sufficient attention to inequality in one 'inequality space', Sen suggests that one may create inequalities within other inequality spaces. Other writers on capabilities and gender have also identified that there are other inequalities that women in particular may face. For example, Robeyns (2003) has argued that relative to men, women have less freedom to determine how to use their time, *time autonomy*, in part due to dominant social norms (see also Phipps, Burton, and Osberg's [2001] work on dual career families).

Sen (1992a) argues that freedom exists in the expansion of the capabilities of persons to lead the kind of lives they value and have reason to value. Being able to be or do what one has reason to value could be thought of as setting a goal of the satisfaction of preferences. Sturges (1999), for example, observes that men and women may differ in how they measure career success. Men, she suggests, appear to focus on external criteria such as status and material success while women focus on internal criteria such as personal recognition, accomplishment and achieving balance in their lives. This may in turn affect career choices, as it appears that the need to strive to reach 'the top' may be more important for men than women who may perceive that the costs

of achieving executive positions outweigh the benefits (O'Connor, 2001). Additionally, there is some suggestion that women and men tend to perceive promotion requirements differently (Wood and Lindorff, 2001): women are less likely to expect promotion (Wood and Lindorff, 2001) and among business students; men are more likely to aspire to top management positions more than women (Powell and Butterfield, 2003). Many women appear to re-evaluate their lives and values at various points in their lives and choose to make changes during their career prompted by a desire for a better work-life balance and a desire for a different lifestyle (Marshall, 1995) which may mean making lateral rather than upward career moves (O'Connor, 2001).

An alternative, and rather less positive, explanation for the 'glass ceiling' can also be derived from the capabilities perspective. Both Sen and Nussbaum have argued that deprived groups often develop *adaptive preferences*: they lower their demands and sights, proscribed by the narrow experiences shaped by the mechanisms of disadvantage. In a gender context, the argument might be that women may become 'stuck' at middle management levels because of organisational constraints and practices that discriminate against women. This in turn might lead to a resultant, corrosive impact on confidence and self-belief, and specifically, an acceptance that advancement to senior levels is beyond their reach. This echoes the lack of ambition and commitment, suggested by Brockbank and Traves (1995) as the reason why women may not advance, but it also suggests that ambition may be lowered because of the difficulty of the task in practice. The latter is consistent with Wood's (2003) observation that explanations in the literature for lack of advancement are often

offered in terms of organisational structural and cultural factors, work practices and employer expectations,

Method

Within this article we focus on the organisational and societal factors that enabled or undermined the freedom of opportunity for the women and men in our study to fully function. The study took place in the UK and potential respondents were identified through a combination of personal contacts, snowball or chain sampling (Goodman, 1961; Henry, 1990; Patton, 1990; Saunders *et al*, 2007) and the membership records of a large Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) branch (the funding provider). 'Snowballing' is a non-probability sampling method used for accessing hard to reach groups. Forty in-depth, face-to-face, semi-structured key informant interviews were conducted with senior women and men over a twenty month period. Each interview lasted between 60 and 90 minutes.

Following guidelines developed by Patton (1990) general topics for discussion were decided in advance but the exact wording and the order of these were decided in each interview. Rather than counting instances and a focus on the generalisability of results, the analysis was focused on the similarities and differences between male and female interviewees in the accounts given to describe their career experiences (Miles and Huberman, 1994). The interviews were tape-recorded, transcribed and then content analysed using open coding and categorisation (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). In addition participants were also asked to rank a series of statements relating to factors which motivated them.

Characteristics of participants

Of the 20 senior women interviewed, 16 of the participants worked in private organisations and four in the not-for-profit sector. All but three of the women were Human Resource (HR) Directors or equivalent (e.g. Vice-President) or Group HR managers. Four were HR managers (in the public sector, but equivalent in responsibility to Group HR managers) and three were consultants who owned their own businesses. The age of participants ranged from one participant under 30 years of age to three who were over 51; two-thirds of the women surveyed were under 45 years old. Seventeen of the participants worked full time and three part-time or pro-rata hours. The participants' salary range was between £40,000 and over £100,000 per year. Among the higher earners, bonuses of between 20 to 50 per cent of their salary was usual.

Of the 20 senior men interviewed, 17 of the participants worked in private organisations and three in the not-for-profit sector. All but four of the men were HR Directors or equivalent (e.g. Vice-President) or Group HR managers. Three were HR managers (in the public sector, but equivalent in responsibility to Group HR managers) and four were consultants. The age of participants ranged from 35 years of age up to 60. All of the men worked full-time. The salary range was between £40,000 and over £150,000 per year. Among the higher earners, bonuses of between 20 to 50 per cent of their salary was usual.

On average, all full-time participants were working at least eight hours overtime per week (that is equivalent to a six day week); with senior men more likely to be represented at the top end (60 hours per week).

Findings

What was valued?

The *'opportunity to improve knowledge'* and *'work where accomplishment was valued'* was regarded as important by the majority of the senior women and men. The desire to continually develop their internal capabilities was a driver for all the respondents with having *'challenging work to do'* emerging as the most important motivator. Our respondents, were willing, and able, to identify and/or create opportunities for themselves. However, one woman respondent suggested, "*Women …look for challenge rather than status*". All the senior women did talk about seeking challenges, and the lack of opportunity for personal growth or challenge was identified as an important reason for seeking new opportunities:

There is a pattern what always happens is I go in climb a mountain, bring about significant shift and then after any shift, like that you go through a period of consolidation when things are embedding in the business and that would be the time that I would then be looking and saying, I am ready for the next mountain. (Female interviewee #16)

Our findings appear consistent with Sturges' (1999) view as male respondents tended to talk about career goals centred on status and recognition:

Bigger job with the same general character, so bigger generally, bigger international generalist job in a big company. (Male interviewee #6)

I aspire to become a Director of the Board in a FTSE 100 type company, so, you know, one step down from Group HRD. I don't at this state aspire to become a Group HRD. (Male interviewee #5)

The women generally focused on personal recognition, accomplishment and achieving balance in their lives (Sturges, 1999). Contrary to O'Connor's (2001) observation, however, this did not appear to affect our female participants striving for and reaching the top. However, none of the senior women were interested in promotion at any cost: doing work that they saw as worthwhile on their terms proscribed what would be seen as desirable, in capabilities terms what was valued. Half expressed a desire to rise further, but with provisos:

But I do want to have a far healthier life (in my new post) than the one I have just left, and had for the last 15 years. (Female interviewee #5)

Some of those interviewed saw their next progression as finding a way out – into either consultancy or a smaller business:

I couldn't earn the money as a personnel director in business that I can earn as a consultant so I think a lot of women do leave business because you can have a more flexible lifestyle and earn more money. (Female interviewee #10)

I wouldn't say there's a class feeling at all but boardrooms I don't think are natural environments for women and it isn't that we can't do it. I'd say the big thing is why would you want to do it? Why would we want to stay in an environment where it's a lot of male values? (Female interviewee #16)

A minority of both the men and women had no desire to progress further:

My experience working with a number of Group HRDs in the organisation that I've seen is that you get too detached from the real HR stuff and in fact, and I don't think it's unique to HR, I think it's anyone who aspires and attains that level of seniority. (Male interviewee #6).

Constraining Factors

Factors that senior women and men regarded as burdensome were both work-related and home/community related. In relation to the work environment a number of the senior women perceived gendered management and success criteria within organisations. Reflecting the growing literature on the masculinities and cultural stereotypes of management in general (Collinson and Hearn, 1994; Kerfoot and Knights, 1993; 1996) and senior management in particular (Charles and Davies, 2000) four of female respondents identified problems with the 'maleness' of the environment, not least that:

Successful women are perceived as very difficult to manage in general unless you have an enlightened manager. (Female interviewee #13)

A number of senior women felt that organisations viewed the performance of men and women differently:

As a senior woman in business, whether you like it or not, your perceived outcomes has to be higher than your average male counterpart (Female interviewee #8)

I think organisations tend to be very testing about women across a far broader spectrum than they are about men. So they will take spikes in a man's performance and accept that far more regularly than just having spikes in a woman's performance …at a very fundamental level men's instincts

are there for men so they understand what a man is about and understand, I think, what those spikes are about. (Female interviewee #10)

I was never even aware of it until somebody; a fellow male executive once asked me did I feel I was being treated differently because of my gender. That made me stop and think; my instinctive reaction was no, why do you see something different? I became aware and conscious and actually discussed that with my boss at the time who was male, and said "do you think you treat me differently?" He said "yes, I give you a harder time".. I said "well what does that mean?" H said " I expect more from you". (Female interviewee #13)

For men the things that were commonly identified as burdensome tended to be issues relating to career progression that were regarded as peripheral or unnecessary work activities with no obvious career benefit:

And as I say this particular job was not a particularly strategic job if you like and I think I'd really been put in that job to sort out a number of personnel issues with the small team that reported to me but I quickly discovered that whilst that was an implied part of the mission, senior management above me clearly didn't have the stomach to address some of the problems in the way that they clearly needed to happen. (Male interviewee #1)

It was murder, you could play games all day, didn't do things very well, l did play things very well, so I thought I am really sick of this and I'm sick of these idiots arguing about their bloody company cars. (Male interviewee #3)

It is important to note that not all male participants were necessarily accepting of or happy about the long hours and absence of work-life balance norms that continued to persist for senior men (Cowling and Turner, 2005; Kunda, 1993):

I work too hard and I've over invested in my career. (Male interviewee #2)

It's very, very difficult to get anything like a balance, if that's to imply some evenness. The long hour's culture is very rigid and has been everywhere I've ever worked frankly, which I think is terribly distressing. (Male interviewee #5)

I think I'm of the generation where, although work is still very important to us, of equal importance is work life balance. (Male interviewee #6)

For female respondents, many were very career-focused until decisions surfaced about starting and raising a family. While none struggled with childcare arrangements, many felt that domestic roles were largely demarcated along traditional lines:

I think it is a very rare thing where you have a relationship where both parents take an equal role in the caring of the children and the domestic activities. I think whether we like it or not the reality is that women do take the greater share of that. (Female interviewee #8)

Although individual respondents cited supportive maternity leave arrangements in their organisations, it was argued that employers' attitudes towards maternity breaks from work still presented a barrier to women's career progression. A break from work was seen as demonstrating less commitment and loyalty to the organisation, particularly in American owned companies. Sabbaticals were viewed differently to career breaks for childcare; those who took a career break for childcare often re-joined the organisation at a lower level than if they had returned from a sabbatical.

The focus in the political and organisational arena has been on the steps that organisations can and should take to support the achievement of work/life balance.

However our evidence suggests that freedom of choice is also seriously impacted by the nature of relationships *outside* the work environment. Many of the men recognised that their work-life balance was dependent on their partners' tolerance of their working long-hours. The reason given for this by some interviewees implicitly or explicitly placed the male participant in the role of 'breadwinner':

*I suppose when I reflect on it, I've had a very understanding wife as well of course for umpteen years, I think I have probably always got the work life balance wrong and probably only in the last couple of years that I've begun to realise that and address it and that doesn't mean that my marriage has been rocky or whatever but I just realised that I had probably not given much time to my family and part of that's due to the fact that for that last, well, all the time I've been a PLC HR Director***.** (Male interviewee #1)

When I did get married it was a sort of traditional set up whereby my wife worked sometime, she was willing to move when we needed to move and she picked up, it wasn't really a dual professional career kind of set up….. So I suppose there is an element of sacrifice there on her part. (Male interviewee #7)

In contrast for many of the women their freedom of opportunity was constrained by the relationships outside of the work environment:

I have a husband who creates far more pain for me than an organisation ever can if I don't manage my boundaries (Female interviewee #7)

My spouse. Yes, he likes having a successful woman as a wife, likes the money; hates the aggro. (Female interviewee #9)

The ability to be flexible in order to combine the demands of home and work emerged as an extremely important factor particularly, although not exclusively, for our female respondents and was perceived as a direct benefit of holding a senior post:

I am very fortunate, because I do a senior job and because the guy I work for, his view is it's not the hours that I put in it's the results that come out, I have a lot of flexibility." (Female interviewee #9)

What I've had to accept in swings and roundabouts is that I do a job that takes me away quite a lot but then that also means … you know once I've got that in I can have a fairly high degree of flexibility and I control my time, nobody else does and we are less busy at times as a business - sorry, in training terms in a business we are less busy at times which fit quite well with school stuff. So whilst in some ways I have had to be away for things then actually I know at other times I probably can do things like going to school concerts and have the day off and take them to the dentist and all that more flexibly than a lot of people. So it is a bit of a trade off. (Male Interviewee # 19)

Of greater concern than the cost or quality of childcare for the 13 female participants with children was the pressure created by the desire to spend what they deemed to be sufficient time with their children:

I think it is also about what is right for you. It is more about what I miss, not about what the children miss because it doesn't really matter to them who washes their socks and there are lots of things that children are very accepting of. It is more about what is important to you and about what you feel you are missing than I think about what they miss. (Female interviewee #5)

I think it is very tough, but I also think that the toughness of it depends upon the view that you take of your role, your role in the job that you do and your role as a parent and your role as a partner of someone else, and actually balancing those three things and getting that right is very, very hard, especially if you want to do the best in all of those things, it is very tough. It's interesting

when you talk about your research a lot of the reasons why maybe women don't want the more senior jobs is for that reason, it is very tough. (Female interviewee #11)

In contrast with the senior women's accounts of work-life balance, most of the senior men focused on career first, and family/community life was expected to fall into line. This did not appear to differ whether the male participants were in dual career families or not:

At times I know I put the job before the family because I was wanting to get on and I had this mind set if I get on I can provide more for the family. (Male interviewee #12)

This finding is consistent with the work of Phipps *et al.* (2001) on dual career families, as well as Robeyns' observations of gender inequalities, and that 'even if their total work hours (paid and unpaid) are equal, the fact that women are often more responsible for domestic work that cannot be postponed generates more stress for them' (Robeyns, 2003, pp. 82-83). Indeed, the cost of pursuing career, that is, what they wanted and what was expected, reads as a cost to family, largely to do with time spent away from home**.** The senior women felt that men generally had the choice to work longer hours because they had strong support mechanisms at home, organised by their female partners, even when their partners had equally demanding careers. One participant commented that of the 12 men on the Board with her, all had wives who did not work**.** However, there was also some indication by male interviewees of the difficulties that too intense a career focus might create in respect of family commitments:

I've got responsibilities in respect of an aged parent in another part of the country and those are my and my own responsibilities, nobody else shares those responsibilities. Fortunately now our kids are

both off our hands so they're not any longer that kind of responsibility but I'm sure there is still the sort of liability in respect of economic liabilities that still are a significant factor. So I can't just simply say I'm going to give up and go and take up pottery or something because we've still got these responsibilities, liabilities surrounding them. (Male interviewee #13)

From a capabilities perspective, these findings resonate with Nussbaum's (in Cornelius and Laurie, 2003) observation that family has been largely left out of the equation in many considerations of what matters in terms of quality of life. Within capabilities theory, family life is regarded as a central plank in relation to both quality of life and the relative freedoms of family members. This is highlighted in Koggel's (2003) view that entering the workplace is not of itself the primary means of ensuring and improving women's freedom and agency. Developmental policy goals, she argues, need to incorporate more detailed understanding, from a capabilities perspective, of the interaction between paid and domestic work, and the extent to which community pressures compromise women's freedoms at work. Though Koggel's work concerned lower level work, her arguments also appear to be true for senior women. Robeyns' (2003) observation of the central importance of domestic work and non-market care (to be able to raise children and to take care of others) and time autonomy also resonate with the findings here.

Robeyns notes that there are likely to be areas of disagreement on what the *optimum* functionings are and that 'we do not know what women and men would choose if they were liberated from their gender roles and thus genuinely free to choose.' (Robeyns, 2003, p. 86). From our findings it does appear that the contestation of time-autonomy and life plans remains largely one-sided, with women having to make and create a marked, female career space in order to make it 'to the top', while men's career

choices and paths remain, above all, followed by men as the normative position, even if they are beginning to question whether this is the most desirable path. However, this cannot simply be dismissed as an adaptive preference. Among capabilities scholars, there is broad agreement on family life as a central entitlement, so one interpretation of the choices made by these senior women is that they have pursued what *they* have reason to value, what *they* regard as essential in order to fully function and flourish. They want fulfilling lives as senior women, and fulfilling family lives. With the resources that seniority affords them, they work proactively and determinedly to achieve this balance. What appears more difficult is for them to challenge the *status quo*, to move their male partners beyond the 'breadwinner' model of domestic commitment and to increase the time commitment to the family - as Nussbaum puts it, the need is necessarily for a loss of male freedoms (Cornelius and Laurie, 2003).

Concluding Remarks

Success, within a capabilities perspective, is something achieved by those who are able to pursue that they have reason to value, and are fully functioning and flourishing. Capabilities theory advocates an enhanced quality of life achieved through the widening of people's freedoms and choices. Measurement of success does not relate purely to economic indicators but needs to include equity, sustainability and empowerment. It could be argued that women who stop short of the 'glass ceiling' are enacting an adaptive preference: that they have their sights lowered and shaped by narrow experience. We would argue that this interpretation is not consistent with the clear and explicit assertions of our female participants about what they valued and wanted; they do not wish to live what they regard as the masculine 'norm' of more

narrowly scoped lives, their identities overwhelmingly shaped by work. These women seek out opportunities which fit with what they have reason to value, and if they find them within their organisations, fine, if not, they are willing and sufficiently confident to move to another organisation, or set up their own businesses, to suit the lifestyle that *they* want, as described earlier. In addition there was evidence to suggest that male respondents were also beginning to question the 'old rules' although few have, as yet, felt able to challenge the traditional measures of success to the same extent.

The research highlighted the importance of the family in relation to choices made and measures of success for the women but there was also some evidence of the increasing importance of this aspect for men. The consequence of this change in outlook leads us to speculate on the existence of a similar barrier for both women and men, the difference being the location of that barrier. The freedom to achieve what they value for these senior women remains challenged by the greater freedoms and choices exercised by men, particularly with regards to time autonomy in the domestic context. However, it could also be argued that unwritten gender expectations, particularly in the work context, which remain difficult to challenge proscribe the degree to which men would feel empowered to reduce their work commitments in favour of increasing their domestic contribution. Thus their time autonomy may be constrained within the organisational context.

These findings have implications for the development of corporate policies in general, and *internal* corporate social responsibility policy (which focuses on employee well-being) and practice in particular. Therefore, we argue the following. First, that it would be timely for a new research direction and agenda which explores the social

responsibility of organisations with regards to what appears to be the continuing but unresolved conflicting interests between the needs of parents, fathers *and* mothers, the family, household, caring responsibilities, and work commitments, with regards to a balanced resolution of time autonomy. It could be argued that for this approach to 'family friendly' policy development needs not only to address needs in terms of parenting, but empower the family, households, and other caring resources also as an act of corporate social responsibility. Second, to reinforce this position, we would suggest that governments and the law need to set a floor of entitlements and expectations for women and men where commitment to the family and caring more generally is seen as an important mark of good citizenship rather than signalling an absence of commitment, with companies required to facilitate this. The most recent 'family friendly' employment laws in the UK may be signals of changes, albeit small ones, in this direction. In this respect the UK has much to learn from societies where such activities and social relations are given higher priority.

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